

THE QL REPORT

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PO Box 5407 Glendale AZ 85312-5407

\$15.00 for 12 issues

1-602-978-2902

May 15, 1987

Vol. 3 No. 5

Well, we're back from the Computerfest! It was a long way to go but it was certainly worth it to meet a lot of you face to face. We hope next year to see even more of you. For those of you who were unable to attend, sit back and relax and we'll tell you all about it here.

We were pleased to announce at the show the TRUMP CARD by Miracle Systems. This is going to be a very nice peripheral add-on for your QL. It consists of a disk interface and a full three-quarter megabyte RAM card, all on a single board. With this installed you end up with an 896k system. Also included is a print spooler, ramdisk software (both dynamic and static), and TOOLKIT II. Also included is a reset function which fools your QL into thinking it is an unexpanded machine. Some programs, as most of us know, like QL CHESS will not run on expanded QL's without modification. The disk interface will support upto two 3 1/2" or 5 1/4" floppy drives. Although, due to the huge amount of memory available, one drive should be sufficient if you utilize the ramdisk options.

We are hoping to receive our first shipments by the end of this month but it might not be until early or mid-June. For those of you who are interested, let us know and we will reserve one for you. Pricing should be under \$300.00 .

Most of the major supporters of the QL were at the Fest including A Plus Computer Response, the distributor. On Sunday they ran a Computerfest special on QL's for \$99.00 and sold fifty to sixty so hopefully someone bought one who lives near some of you. They also informed us they had microdrive cartridges back in stock but that the price would go up to \$12.95 for a four-pak.

The Holiday Inn-North in Indianapolis, where the Computerfest was held, was a very nice property. Being from Arizona, we had forgotten how green everything could be. There was an indoor pool where you could see various dealers and supporters relaxing after hours. The Fest itself was in four rooms on the second floor. Much to the chagrin of most dealers, the elevator was not working so everyone had to carry their equipment and products up the stairs-- it was good exercise. Two were for vendors displaying their products and the other two were for seminars. Transcripts of some of the seminars are available, including ours on the QL in the small business . Write for more info.

A banquet was held Friday evening where everyone got to get acquainted with one another. A nice buffet dinner was served. Afterwards, A Plus held a meeting with all the QL dealers in attendance. They informed us

they still had plenty of QL's in stock, at least enough to last through the end of this year. Between these stocks and the clones coming out such as THOR and FUTURA, it seems as if Sinclair's "dead" computer is going to be around for awhile.

We want to thank the Computerfest committee for a job well done. Frank Davis and Paul Holmgrim and Basil Wentworth (and others) really did an excellent job and should be commended. It looks like the Midwest Timex-Sinclair Computerfest will be around for a long time to come and we urge all of you to try and attend. There already is talk of holding shows in various parts of the country. Hopefully there will be one out here in the West.

Although the show was for all Sinclair computers, the QL was the machine receiving the most support. Everything from books and magazines to keyboards, software and British ROMS were available. What we want to do now is tell you about some of the new items.

We saw the Schoen keyboard and were not impressed. The dealer displaying it said it was very easy to install but we have heard of some customers experiencing difficulty. There is not a numeric keypad although this is being worked on as an add-on item. The keyboard on your QL is removed and the Schoen is put on in its place. The keys are more like a real typewriter's keys but for the price (\$99.00) we feel there is nothing wrong with the QL keyboard.

One thing we did see at the show which we will be carrying is a NEW ROM BOARD for your QL. It is one board that replaces both ROM chips. It will cure over-heating problems and will reduce power consumption by 20% and reduce the temperature of the heat-sink by upto 50 degrees. We can put on the NEW ROM BOARD one of three programs free of charge (I.C.E., TOOLKIT II, or QFLASH) if you return your original cartridge to us. The NEW ROM BOARD can also be made with a switch so that you can turn on or off one of these programs and keep the back ROM slot free. It can be made with either JSU(American) or JS(British) version. Please specify when ordering. Please also allow three weeks for delivery.

If you elect to put in a British ROM, remember this will allow you to run such programs as SUPER CROUPIER, by Pyramide, the excellent Vegas gamespak which includes Roulette, poker, Baccarate, High-Lo, slot machine, and Black Jack. Programs like Pyramide's VROOM which doesn't quite line up correctly on the screen would now work fine. Or CADPAK which also does not quite line up the graphic boxes correctly on a U.S. QL.

We also saw a new icon-driven program by Peech II Productions called ELECTRIQL DESK. At a suggested retail of \$24.95 it is a nice little program. Once loaded, the icon-driven menu has numbers next to the icons which you enter to access the various programs. Included within ELECTRIQL DESK is a calendar where you can enter notes for a particular day, much like an appointment scheduler. There is also a budget program. There is an icon called VIEW which will list the directory of your microdrive cartridge to a window on the screen. PRINTER allows you to print a particular file. CALCULATOR is

self-explanatory. You can, if you also have I.C.E., easily move back and forth between the two programs. A NETWORKING icon allows you to transfer files from one station to another. And, a PHONE BOOK icon allows you to enter names, addresses, and phone numbers. The program is good but somewhat slow so be prepared to wait a little as it accesses the different icons.

Talent has released OXFORD TRIVIA which we had at the show. It is described as a challenging quiz game for single players or for a group. Originally a successful pub/arcade type video game, it has now been adapted for the QL. Over 16,000 questions covering some 16 topics are available and the first four topics, World Facts, Films, Pop Music, and Sport are included.

The game starts as soon as the questions have loaded. A question appears in the box at the top of the screen. The player must wager a percentage of his points on whether he will answer the question correctly by selecting one of the boxes positioned around the four way arrow using one of the cursor keys. If you delay too long, you are given a default wager of 50%. The four answer boxes then slide onto the screen and the player must select the correct answer with the cursor keys in the same way. Questions are accessed randomly and there is a check to make sure that the same question is not repeated within the next 50 questions.

Also available from Talent is JUNGLE EDDI which is a colorful and challenging arcade game. It is a platform style game that reminds us of something like JET SET WILLY or MANIC MINER on the Spectrum.

Talent has a new version of PCB1 coming out which will do double-sided boards and will still have auto-routing. We will give you more details as they become available to us.

We took the new SANDY SUPER QBOARD with MOUSE with us to the show. The unit consists of 512k RAM, a two button mouse, which has a db-9 plug which connects to the side of the board, a disk I/F port and a parallel I/F port. The program QRAM is included on disk as well as CADPAK. TOOLKIT II is resident in EPROM and is invoked with the "TK2_EXT" command.

We have not completed testing yet and everything works fine except that the disk I/F we noticed does not seem to work too well with 3" drives. On our Mitsubishi half-height quad density drives it works fine and also tested okay on a Shugart 460 drive.

If it checks out okay, this should be a very nice combination. QRAM is an excellent program by itself. With the mouse it is very useful. The ramdisk is static as well as dynamic and super fast. The file-handling capabilities from within QRAM are very extensive. You can view, copy backup, delete, format and exchange files from one storage medium to another. You can check on the jobs running, alter them, etc. Dimensions of windows can be changed. Files going to a printer allows you to select the type of printer you have and the range of choices includes various Epson's, Seikosha's and Canon. The dump facility works fine on the QL printer and we have included samples of screens from ELECTRIQL DESK and MANDELBROT MAGIC elsewhere in QLR. The Mandelbrot dump has

the QRAM print option window on it. By hitting the ALT key and the "/" key, you access QRAM, even from within other programs and then are able to copy files, print information, do screen dumps, etc.

All things considered, this is a good buy if you want everything at once. If you add up the price of everything separately- TOOLKIT II, QRAM, CADPAK, a MOUSE, 512K RAM, disk I/F, the SUPERQBOARD is over \$100 cheaper. The only slight problem you may have is with installation of the board. Because it is so compact a unit, when you go to install the board in the expansion slot, you MUST either open the keyboard or remove two small plastic "stubs" that you can see on the top of the expansion port door. If you do not do this, it will be impossible to install the board and you could damage it.

QRAM is available by itself on microdrive cartridge and is easily converted to disk. We find it somewhat more versatile than I.C.E. because it gives you more information on the screen and has the ramdisk option built-in to the program. It is not an add-on the way CHOICE is with I.C.E. Make sure if you order from another dealer besides us that the package is in a grey hard plastic box with the skinny label on the cartridge saying "QRAM" and the larger label having the "QJUMP" logo. If it does not have all of this, it is a forgery and a pirated copy and we want you to let us know. There have been rumours of these pirated copies being circulated here in the States. We will give a \$25 credit memo to the first person sending us one with the name, date, etc. of the dealer where purchased. We hope these rumours are just that. But if they are true, we urge you not to support anyone or anybody who is making profits at the expense of the programmer and legitimate dealers.

Dr. Howard Clase of Newfoundland has sent some new observations on QVILL. We reprint excerpts from his letter below:

"There still seem to be a couple of dormant bugs lurking about in versions 2.1 and 2.35, involving cursor movement. As far as I can tell they only wake up when the "Copy" or "Erase" commands are used. After the use of "Erase" the "SHIFT down-arrow" function, which ought to move the cursor to the bottom of the paragraph only works intermittently. In fact the program thinks the cursor moves, it just doesn't show on the screen. You can correct it with screen refresh (SHIFT & F5"-undocumented) but it doesn't cure the bug. More dangerously, repeated use of "up-arrow" to move up line by line can cause the program to hang up completely (but not the machine, if you can escape into Basic you will find that that works OK). I am not sure whether ERASE or COPY is responsible for this since I cannot reproduce it to order. The only way to deal with this is to save a copy of the document to disk or tape after using these commands. If it is reloaded the bugs seem to be dormant again.

SAVING BLOCKS OF TEXT FROM QUILL DOCUMENTS

This facility, the reverse of MERGE, was not included in QUILL, presumably for reasons of space. It can be done, with some trouble, in the following way.

First make sure you have a copy of the original whole, otherwise you will have to reverse most of the following operations to get it back!

1. Use the page break command to force a page break immediately before and after the block of text you want to copy.
2. Set the left and indent margins as far to the left as they will go. (Hold the left-arrow key down, then it doesn't rewrite the whole screen every step of the way).
3. Set left justification.
4. Set header and footer to none.
5. Set upper margin and bottom margin to 0.

note: (2&3 are to avoid unnecessary spaces in the text, and 4&5 to avoid unwanted lines before and after your block).

6. Use the QUILL Print command to print the required page(s) to a file (e.g. "flp1_block"). Use a special printer driver (printer_dat) with no control codes except LF for preamble code, end of line, and postamble code, and no translates. This gives a more or less straight ASCII file called "block_lis".

7. Save your doctored file under a special name in case you didn't get everything right the first time, and then load the doc that you want to put your block into. Put the cursor in the right place and import "block_lis" by paragraph (you have to include the _lis extension this time).

8. Tidy up the margins and justification to what you want. Importing seems to leave you left justified with both indent and left margins at the extreme left, but the right margin is unaltered.

9. If everything looks OK save the doc, delete the doctored file, and the _lis file, unless you think you want it again.

I prefer this to the alternative of erasing the unwanted bits from the original file, since erase is so slow and generates bugs. On the other hand it might be quicker just to type it all in again!"

//

FILE PEEKIN'

===== by Marshall Stiles

Have you ever wondered what was in a file on the microdrive? I guess I must be the curious type! I just had to find out, but it took me awhile to discover a method for doing so. In the past I had always opened a channel for input and then used the INPUT keyword plus "#" and the channel designation for reading files. Using this method, I was every now and then prompted by the QL with an end of file message and my program would come to a halt. If you try to read a binary file (a file which is not an ASCII file), you usually don't get very far at all. Eventually I discovered that using INKEY\$ did not produce the same results. In fact, you can bring any file to the screen or to another file or device byte by byte. What the QL does with INKEY\$ is to read in each code in the file as a keystroke. The following listing is a simple demonstration of how the technique can be used:

```
100 REMark peek_bas, 1986, Marshall Stiles
110 CLS:CLS #0:cc=0
120 INPUT "mdv?_filename = " ! f1$
130 OPEN_IN #3, f1$:PRINT #0, "Press <ENTER> repeatedly..."
140 OPEN #4, con_72x100a50x10:BORDER #4,1,1,7,0:CLS #4
150 OPEN #5, con_256x100a164x10:BORDER #5,1,1,7,0:CLS #5
160 REPEAT loop
170   k=CODE(INKEY$(#3))
180   cc=cc+1
190   PRINT #4,cc;:PRINT #4,TO 4, k : PRINT #5,CHR$(k);
200   IF EOF(#3) THEN EXIT loop
210   INPUT#0, ENTER_KEY$:IF ENTER_KEY$<>"" THEN GO TO 210
220 END REPEAT loop
230 PRINT #4, "end of file"
240 PRINT #5:PRINT #5, "chars=";cc
250 CLOSE #3:CLOSE #4:CLOSE #5
```

The first column on the left gives you a reference point (counts characters). The second column gives you the code of the character at that reference point. The last number printed is the code for the last character printed in the window on the right.

In the program's present form it only allows you to "see" what is in the file. With some alterations it can be made to change things. If you channel the output going to the screen to another file, it will make a byte by byte copy of the original file. Try the above program on a QUILL file and notice the use of character code 0.
//

We will have a battery back-up clock for the QL by mid-June or perhaps a little earlier. No soldering will be required. Once you use the "sdate" command, the clock will be set and keep the correct time even when the machine is turned off. Suggested retail price will be under \$25.

We should have the CP/M EMULATOR in stock shortly after you receive this issue of QLR. The emulator consists of a ROM cartridge and the necessary software on disk. We have both 3 1/2" and 5 1/4" versions available so please specify when ordering. The emulator runs practically all CP/M software available, from WORDSTAR to Borland's TURBO PASCAL and DBASE II. If you have QRAM, which we recommend very highly, you will be able to have both operating systems co-reside in memory at the same time. This means, for example, you can be working on a WORDSTAR document, exit to QRAM, and then go into QUILL in a space of about 10 seconds. We will be offering a large library of public domain CP/M software for a very nominal charge to put it on a disk.

As far as other software is concerned, we have TOUCH N' GO back in stock for any of you that want a nice little typing tutor program. We have had trouble getting it so call first to make sure it is still in stock. LIBERATOR has anew, updated version available. This is an excellent SuperBasic compiler. For those of you who have waited to purchase, you now can get the best version possible.

We have received QWRITER from Ultrasoft and it is a very nice little program. All sorts of different fonts are available, from Old English to Greek to Italic. You merely boot the program which adds a special keyword and then open a channel and specify after the keyword which font you want to use, and anything you type will be printed on your printer in that fontstyle.

We are using THOR extensively now and do like most of the aspects of the machine- the keyboard, XCHANGE, TOOLKIT built-in and other features. There is a long lead time between ordering and receiving but if you are interested, call and we can quote pricing. We can order anything from a base configuration like we did (where you put in the circuit board and drive(s) to a full 20mb system. A fifty per cent down payment will be required. The base units usually only take about a month to receive but the 20mb systems can take two to three. XCHANGE does come as standard on each configuration on 3 1/2" disk.

The machine we are also eagerly awaiting for is Futura. According to Sandy who will be producing the machine, the hardware is finished. All that remains now is for Tony Tebby to finish the software. The machine is still tentatively scheduled for release in July so we will keep you posted.

On a slightly unrelated note, we received a letter from Sir Clive last week informing us that our Z88 computer is scheduled to be shipped May 13th. Again, software problems are delaying that machine also. A lot of you have expressed interest in this portable so we will at least mention in QLR when we receive it so you can call to request additional information.

Next month we should have more information on FUTURA, and will give you a full report on the CP/M EMULATOR. TRUMP CARD should also be available so for those of you interested, reserve yours early-supplies will initially be interested. Sandy's SUPERQBOARD with MOUSE is here now.

Here are some fonts from QWRITER.

It is a nice program and easy to use.

Below are screen dumps from QRAM.

Until next month, enjoy your QL.

